

BUYING GIFTS ONLINE COULD BE EASIER

- AMAZON AND 'I WANT ONE OF THOSE' OFFER BEST GIFT SERVICE ONLINE -

With online spending this Christmas expected to smash the £10 billion mark for the first time*, customer experience benchmarking company Global Reviews has revealed the results of its independent study of the websites of 19 leading retailers. The study looked at whether online retailers are meeting the needs of prospective customers in the run up to Christmas.

The quality of the gift service online is especially important at this time of year, but the study found that there is a huge difference in the service offered by online retailers. Customers want to be able to search for gifts by price, gender, occasion and age, as well as information on the most popular items purchased and the guaranteed delivery dates before Christmas.

The study found that;

- *Amazon* and '*I want one of those*' offer an impressive gift service, scoring 75%.
- Three companies in the study were found to not offer any gift service, *Freemans*, *Empire Direct* and *Littlewoods*.
- *Apple* scored 43%, *Debenhams* 47% and *HMV* only 40% in this category.

The study also found that customers want information about the deliver options. The study looked at the information available on the different websites including how many days the delivery will take, the size of the delivery window, the ability to choose faster options and whether purchases can be delivered at weekends as well as weekdays.

Adam Goodvach, Director, Global Reviews said, "Some customers know what they want to buy for their loved ones but many more are uncertain. Websites offering gift selections provide an advisory service that is valuable to customers and will keep them coming back. It also enables website owners to promote the products they want to sell."

OTHER FINDINGS

Delivery options were the area where websites varied the most;

- *Argos* came top with a score of 88%
- *Apple* scored only 11%.
- Surprisingly *Amazon* scored only 22%, however as most of its products are delivered by post, flexible delivery times are less important.

Overall, the study found that the majority of online retailers scored highly, with Amazon coming top of the 'E-tail League Table'. All websites received overall scores of over 49%, with an industry average of 58%. *Amazon* had the best overall score of 68%, closely followed by *John Lewis* with 65%. *Boden* had the lowest score of 49%.

Other interesting results included;

- All providers received high scores for their shopping carts i.e. the efficiency of buying online. '*I want one of those*' and '*Toys R Us*' received the highest score of 90% in this category.



- The error handling category measures the ability to alert customers when they have made a mistake with their order, and recognises if the site can remember the information already provided, or if customers need to start again. *HMV*, *Debenhams* and *Amazon* were found to offer the best error handling service online, with scores of 86% each. *Apple* and *'I want one of those'* scored only 43%.
- *QVC* was found to offer the best payment options online with a score of 82%, closely followed by *Debenhams*, *Dixons* and *Dell* at 80%.
- *Empire Direct* (77%) and *HMV* (75%) offer the best product selection online.
- *Apple* (82%) has the best product details online.

Global Reviews surveyed over 1,000 people to find out what consumers want from a retail website. It then combined the findings with research of the best industry websites globally to create a benchmark of best-practice for the retail industry. This includes 120 different industry specific criteria against which 19 of the UK's leading provider websites were assessed, including the efficiency of the purchasing process, payment options, product selection available, product details, the gift service available, delivery options and the handling of customer errors online. The percentage scores indicate how close the websites are to delivering the 'perfect' customer experience.

End

*Online spend research from e-commerce analysts IMRG
The benchmark was conducted in September 2007.

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Notes to Editors

Global Reviews measures and improves the customer experience of its clients with offices in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Banking clients include HSBC, Citibank, ING Direct, National Australia Bank, and Hertz. The company also benchmarks websites across 25 non-banking industries and provides actionable recommendations to improve customer acquisition and boost retention. More information about Global Reviews is available at www.globalreviews.co.uk.